

“Now I Have Hope.”

Asma and Taylor

“Now I Have Hope.”

A: I never have hope before I was in United States. Now I have hope.

[Asma’s first years in the United States were utterly full. The selections below give only a glimpse of her arrival and steps at establishing a life here. They do not capture the breadth of emotion, experience, and strength of her journey, but they attempt to echo it. This journey began in an airport.]

A: And then they, they, they give each of us a paper, for, eh they are showing they forgive us, so we can travel anytime the visa is ready.

T: Mhm.

A: So we take that with us, that paper? After a few days, um, after we get everything we are ready, so the government—no, no, the refugee office give us the day exactly we are leaving the country.

T: Mhm.

[fade]

T: There were six of you then?

A: Six of us. We-we all was, we all were refugee.

T: Mmm.

A: Same process we come through. So, um, I went, first time, I went to Michigan.

T: Okay.

[fade]

A: So, yes. And then I went to Michigan, with...um...When I went to airport, I didn’t know where to go.

T: Yeah.

A: Nobody was there for me. I hold the bag, and they told me, “Don’t lose this bag, if you lose this bag, you lost it. [laughs] Nobody know you.”

T: Yeah.

A: “You don’t have anything else. You lost if you lose this bag.”

T: Yeah.

A: And the bag is, um, picture for IOM, and picture for that, the United States people refugees?

T: Mhm.

A: There is picture, I think you know it. You see it before, I don't know. Refugees they have a bag always, or packet to show they are refugee.

[The helper then drove her to an apartment building, where she would live for her first few months before setting out on her own.]

A: He-they, uh, they-they-they get me home, like a one-room, have a kitchen everything ready, even some clothes, toilet, everything was ready—food in the refrigerator, everything. When I come I say, “Who's here?” He say, “No one. Enjoy. Only you.”

T: Yeah.

A: I look around everywhere, I say, “Where am I?” I was so afraid. So afraid?

T: Yeah.

A: And I say, “Where I?” He say, “You gonna be here, um, until you get a job and change your life and you can go out and do your own things. You be here and we're gonna pay the rent for you, we're gonna give you some cash, we're gonna give you some food stamps... And to pay your food. We're gonna give you medical to go to hospital or if you get sick.... We're gonna take care of you eight months.”

T: Yeah.

A: “After eight months, you already know the city and everything and you're done.”

T: Okay. So you were in the city? You were living in the city of Detroit? Or were you kind of like outside?

A: No, no, in the middle of the city like here. And I say, “Okay, um...” I was very tired, I say, “Okay.” He told me everything's refrigerator—he showed me, “You can cook—” Showed me the kitchen, I say, “I already know, I went to Damascus.” [laughs]

T: You know how to work a kitchen.

A: Yeah. And then he say, “Okay. Some people, they're, they're live a different way, like ah—in Kenya, Kenya, Kenya refugees they never see the kitchen the way it looks like it.”

T: Mmm.

A: “Like this way. So that's why if you need anything, for you to ask us.” And I'm like, “Okay.” And we're speaking Arabic, I know *no* English.

T: Yeah.

A: No English, zero. Just Arabic. [laughs] And then, eh, he left. After he left, I start crying.

T: 'Cause you're all alone.

A: I'm alone. If I open the door, I don't know where, where I go—I-I can't talk to my neighbor, because I don't know English. I don't know what to do in the world. I don't have a cell phone to talk to my mom...

[After so many years of trying to get here, Asma is utterly alone and completely lost. She decides to try and move down to Louisville, where two of the other young women on her plane ended up.]

A: After I arrive in United States, I just...I have the paper, I have—the girl who was in Kentucky, I—they give me a phone number, and I give them my phone number.

T: Mhm.

A: Be-because we have the phone number for the agents we are going to.

T: Yeah.

A: That agents have a number.

T: Okay.

A: So I give them my phone number the agents I am, and they give me the phone number the agent they are.

T: Right.

A: So I felt myself—I am the only one who arrive here, I don't feel eh, safe?

T: Mhm

A: Ehh. Room, house, my, myself, and yeah. And I asking the man, I say, "Is there any community, Somalian community here?" He say, "Aaah, they're a little bit far away, two hours."

[fade]

A: And then I, I told him, "Hey, I want to call my mom. Because I haven't called her since I was here." He took me third day.

T: That-that was the third day.

A: Yeah, that was the third day. He come check me in, he come to me. Knock the door, come to me.

T: And you'd just been inside?

A: Yeah, been inside, I-I-I I'm scared to get out. He told me, "You have a neighbor like you, refugee, he was here two months ago?"

T: Yeah.

A: In-in the house number. It was the building?

T: Yeah.

A: Who have like two room, one room. It like...The doors in front each other.

T: Mm.

A: Like we are. And then I was trying to knock that door, but he's a man, and I don't know him.

T: Yeah.

A: I still afraid for, that my neighbor, too. [laughs]

T: Yeah.

A: So, I don't even, even if he knock the door I will open it, but I cannot knock the door because I don't know him, it was very scary. I say, "Hey, I need to call my mom." The third day he check me and he told me, "You wanna go shopping? You wanna go outside shopping?" I say, "Of course!" He took me to Giant Eagle.

T: Oh, really? [A laughs] How was that?

A: It was *big*! I lost and said, "What...the heck is this?" [laughs] The stores in back home, they're smalls, smalls!

T: Yeah.

A: And they're not, they're not buying everything—if you go to some stores, you're buying grains, buying food, you go to another one, you're buying food, another one...

T: Right.

A: ...Clothes, is separate. But this one has everything!

T: Everything.

A: And I say, "What is this?" I went to Giant Eagle, I say, "I want to buy something, buy food." I remember, meat, I need to buy some meat. And he told me, "This is the place for meat." And all the meats is frozen.

T: Yeah?

A: I-I never saw frozen meat.

T: Yeah.

A: Fresh meat. They, they kill it in the morning, and they put it there in afternoon, until afternoon, it will be finished everything.

T: Yeah.

A: Small stores. They don't have meat like frozen, everything is freezing, I was like, "What? How—how could I trust this is good meat [laughs] or something else?"

T: Yeah.

[fade]

A: When we come back, I call my mom. Um, after I call my mom—he buy me a card for there, because you can not call the phone for his phone out the country.

T: Yeah...

A: So I have to buy small card...

T: International card.

A: Yeah. He buy me that, I call my mom, and she was so sad when I called my sister told me, “Hey. You, you my mom is very lucky you are calling this time. You see what my mom is like, she is just hitting her head in the, in the wall.” “Why?”

A: “She is just worrying you a lot. If you’re alive, if you’re not alive, she’s worrying a *lot* for you.”

T: She was worried about you?

A: “She even didn’t sleep.”

T: Yeah.

A: I say, “I’m very sorry. I’m alone at home. I don’t know where to contact you.” She say, “You should have contacted me first day you get there.” I say, “I forget to ask the man with the phone.”

T: Yeah.

A: “The first day, I didn’t know where I’m going, I forget to ask.” Then I called, I told him, “I’m not gonna stay here.” On the same day, I tell him, “I’m not gonna stay here, I wanna go back to, I wanna go back to go see my friends.”

T: Yeah.

A: He say, “Your friends are far away, Kentucky, you have to drive, eh, more than four hours!”

T: Yeah.

A: I told him, “Okay, what am I supposed to do?” He told me, “Okay, we gonna contact today, we gonna ask him how they, how they are, ask them if you can come. I’m gonna contact the agents, they, the one who I just...put them there. I’m gonna contact you. If they accept you, and they say, ‘Okay, we’re gonna, we’re gonna, we’re gonna, we’re gonna help the girl...’”

T: Mhm.

A: “I’m gonna send you there. But if they did—if they don’t want you, I can not afford to take you.”

T: Yeah.

A: "But you need help this time, you cannot go by yourself." I say, "Okay."

[fade]

A: I called them, the girls, I ask them, I say, "I wanna come." There's one who, who's eh, there's eh, two girl. The one is mature, she's like her age, maybe thirty-five, something like that...

T: Twenty-five? Or thirty-five?

A: Thirty-five. She understand every situation, and the other one, she's twenty-three, twenty-four, she's older than me little bit, but she's like a crazy [laughs]. She—by the time she called me she say, "Hey! Are you alive?! Are you alive!?"

T: Yeah?

A: "Alive? Oh my gosh! Where are you!? Okay! Please, please, please, can you come?"

T: Okay.

A: I say, "Why?" "Be-because you're alone there!" I say, "I'm alone here." She say, "Nonono, I want to talk to that man, and he's gonna get you bring you here." I say, "Are you sure?" "I'm gonna talk to him, just let me see tomorrow." I say, "You're crazy." She say, "I'm serious. You can't be alone. [laughs] This country's very dangerous!"

T: Yeah.

A: And I was laughing about her. She was worrying about me, just a crazy, little bit. And then [clears throat] she talked to the man, she talked to that man, and that man say, "Okay. Give me where is the girl? Give me the information."

T: Yeah.

A: She give him the number, and the number is straight they called the, the office.

T: Yeah.

A: She say, "There is girl, [Asma] who arrive that time. There is her friend here, she is alone there, she is not comfortable, will you please send me all her information? Her case?"

T: Right.

A: "Send me her case and send me that girl. I'm gonna get place for her." That man was so respectful. He was here maybe since 1993?

T: Oh, wow.

A: Yeah. After the war, straight, there was the first people who come, who arrive in the United States. And, and after that, the case worker, my case worker talk to me, he come to, eh door and tell me, "Hey, I have good news for you. The man who contacted me and he need you to, we gonna transfer you there." I say, "I'm so happy." He say, "Okay, I'm gonna buy you ticket tomorrow, eh, bus ticket. I'm gonna buy you that."

T: Okay.

A: “We didn’t open your file here because you only week here. We gonna transfer you everything here. We gonna transfer you there, with your friends.”

T: Start your whole case over there...

A: Yeah, whole case over there. And then they send me there! He give me the bus....

[And so, with absolutely no knowledge of English, Asma boarded a Greyhound that took her from Detroit to Columbus, and then finally to Louisville.]

A: I went to Kentucky. Who picked me in the bus stop, it was my two friend...

T: Yeah.

A: Um, they pick me up and put me at home, they take me—oh! Actually, they don’t driving. They don’t drive.

T: Yeah.

A: But they call some friend, they meet the—they meet everything so quick!

T: Yeah, because they have...

A: They have a lot of Somalians in Louisville.

T: Oh, okay.

A: They, they find, they-they meet somebody for friends, they have a phone, already, everything, already their case is open, and they find someone and they say, “Hey. We have a lost girl, [laughs] we’re gonna bring her home.”

T: You have a lost girl? [laughs]

A: Yeah. “We have a lost girl, she’s coming tonight!”

[After Asma arrived in Kentucky, she and her two friends started their new lives in the United States. Asma was much closer with the younger of the two women, who left four children and a divorced husband behind, got remarried, and eventually brought her children over to the United States.]

A: She, she is so strong, strong. She have a, ability. She have a personality like... She’s a fighter.

T: Yeah.

[Together, these three women found their first jobs in the United States. Asma first worked at UPS, and then she transferred to a factory that repaired broken phones for Sprint. Asma liked this second job best, sitting around a big table, working on phones with other people from all walks of life.]

A: So mostly, mostly young people who arrive who are really, most need work.

T: Yeah?

A: They show every day. And the way you show, the way you show, they accept you. I mean, when you need work, it's most most... You putting everything is this job, right?

T: Yeah. Yeah.

A: So some people, they show up two days, three days, American people, and they call off—they can get a job anywhere they go.

T: Yeah.

A: But we don't have a choice to get any j—any job we wanted, so we get job, and we *put* ourselves there and...

T: Yeah, so you...

A: We wanna stay for longer [laughs].

T: So you would sit at that table with all kinds of different people?

A: Yeah, we were three people for Somalian, the others were American.

T: Yeah.

A: Yeah. Black, white, Mexican...

T: Did you talk to them?

A: Yeah! My first supervisor *loved* me, much much much much.

T: Yeah?

A: Yeah. Because I didn't know the English, I were very quiet.

T: Yeah?

A: And every time he send me somewhere, he have three lines. If he say, "[Asma], today I want you to work that line."

T: Yeah.

A: "Somebody's calling off, and you have to work there, we don't have a person." I used to go. I didn't complain. Overtime, no complain.

T: You were a good employee.

A: I was good. I never call off. For my ninety days.

T: Yeah.

A: And I don't have my car at that time.

T: Mmmm.

A: Someone else was driving me.

T: Impressive.

A: Yeah, that was crazy. Even that person not going to work, I have to call another one.

T: And you, you got there.

A: Yeah. I got to get there. As early as much. Yeah.

T: Was it a lot of women that worked there?

A: Women, and mans, yeah.

T: Both?

A: Yeah. Together, like normal. Yeah.

T: That's cool.

A: Yeah. He used to, he used to show me like, like a daughter.

T: Yeah?

A: My, my supervisor.

T: Yeah.

A: Um, because he have a son who was nineteen, like my age, and he get his girlfriend—at same house his daddy, and he have a baby. And he used to say, “I’m, I’m a grand-grandpa...”

T: Granddad.

A: “Because my son he’s a age like you and he have already, his girlfriend pregnant and I have to take them, all of them up in my house.”

T: Yeah.

A: “Until he finish college, because he’s going to college.” So I—that man, he was a responsible man.

T: Yeah?

A: Yeah.

T: But yeah, but you—you still knew enough English that you could communicate with them?

A: Yeah, little bit. Little bit. I mean, I-I start to go to the school, the ESL free school?

T: Yeah.

A: After you arrive? So, I, I was trying to understand more, to learn more. I was looking, even to learn was broken English sometime? Putting together?

T: Mhm.

A: But I was trying to communicate.

T: Yeah.

A: But not everybody. The one I feel only comfortable with me.

T: Right.

A: Yeah.

[If there are a handful of driving forces behind Asma's journey, one of them would be the connections she forms with others. Throughout our conversations, she described the smallest interactions with profound detail, and the list of people she is still in contact with through Facebook and email is astounding.]

T: How did you meet these people, though? So like at work, sometimes just by chance—was there like a place where you all got together and all that?

A: No.

T: Just kind of one by one...?

A: At work...

T: Little places.

A: I mean yeah, I don't know, my culture, my culture is like that. Maybe if today they have a meeting and American people, they never contact, they never give out their contact to each other.

T: Yeah.

A: But if Somalian people meet somewhere—not in America only, in *anywhere*—out the country, they love to leave the contact—eh, the contact each other. Phone number, emails, Facebook, something like that. That's the culture, I find it, we have that culture. I made now, in my college, I just have a one week, remember? Last week. I knew more than, eh, four girls. Four girls' numbers, I have it.

T: You have four girls' numbers?

A: So, we just contact each other.

T: Yeah?

A: We...I mean, you don't have to call the number you, you take that person, you don't have to contact them, you don't have to see them.

T: Yeah?

A: But as soon day you need it? You can contact them. Say, "Hey [??] How are you?"

T: And no matter what happens, you can pick up and they'll help you.

A: You can contact, and yeah. They help you. That-that's the way we, are.

T: Yeah.

[And so, as Asma's two friends move on and out of the house they shared, she continues to find opportunities for herself through these connections.]

A: I am the only one the house.

T: Huh.

A: And the one with the boyfriend, I asked her, "You Muslim. I know you like this man. But how are you going to leave your house? This is your house." She say, "This is America, we have to figure out everybody. You have to figure out..." And that man... He, he had, he was before here. So I feel like she needed help for here.

T: Yeah?

A: So, he rents an apartment, a two-bedroom apartment, he give her one, she gets one, and then, like, they're not a couple, but they're sharing any and everything, and he put, he take, he take her to fill her application for her, and then he took her the same job he had, and I got a job, too, but I'm the only one in the house, so all my money maybe go into that house. So I find a friend for the same job I was working there, and then she helped me, she sends me her big brother, she's Somalian, too, and she sends me her big brother, and a truck, her husband used to live in Canada, and she lived there, she say, "I have an empty room." I say, "You have it, you know anyone I can share the rooms with, I can't..."

T: You can't afford this house all on your own.

A: Yeah, I can't afford this house, because the other girls, they find a place, so I'm the only one left here. She say, "You can come with me. I have a apartment with two bedrooms, I use one, the other one I don't use. My husband, he's not here, he's in Canada, sometimes I'm in Canada, sometimes I'm here, and it's okay. I was like, "I'm all right! I'm with the right friend!"

[After living alone in a house that was too expensive for one recently arrived refugee, Asma was grateful to find another roommate who wanted female company. Because that loneliness, atop all of the stress of starting completely over in a new country, can be incredibly hard on a person.]

A: I prayed—I used to pray a lot, I used to read the Holy Qur'an, I used it to save me. Because some nights I'm coming home from work, some friend gonna drop me, I don't have a car, some friend gonna drop me at the house, I say, "Hey, stay with the phone, don't leave until I check everything." I go upstairs and I go check one room, and then I go check the other room, and then I go check the bathroom, and I go check the kitchen, and I say, "No one is here." And that, that boy, I, I remember, he say, "No one will be there, you don't have to be so afraid, go to sleep!" [we laugh]

T: What a friend. Sometimes you need that kind of friend, though.

A: Yeah!

T: Sometimes...It-it feels irrational, but sometimes you have to, you have to, to...

A: To open your mouth to bring in the people. I mean... There's some stranger people. You have to pay attention to who is stranger and who is nice. Like, as, as you, how many people who hurt while they're in college? Who're raped? Who're thrown out? I hear the news every day, the college girls who, who're kidnapped, it is the same thing in every country, everywhere. So I always look before I become the friend for the person, and I, I always used to shy, and some girls, they say, "You're doing too much, you'll be lonely," and I don't want to be lonely, I just wanna, I don't wanna, eh, eh, meet strangers, so I be nice to everybody, I have to be in school because I'm scared. And then the process, after six months, I buy a car. My first car was a, a Toyota Corolla, the small one? [laughs]

T: Yeah?

A: And then...she was used a lot, but I buy her almost three thousand. I remember, I put down two thousand, cash, and then I tell her, "I'll buy you little by little while I driving."

T: Yeah.

A: After three months, when I was in United States, I get my license.

T: Yeah?

A: I get my driver's license, and it was so risk... No one teach me how to drive, no one to teach me how to drive.

T: Yeah.

[fade]

A: Yeah, the story was... After six months, I get the car, but then the whole process, it make me stressed, like crazy. I slept one night, and I dreamed I don't have clothes except for a white sheet, like the sheets on the bed, that was a dream, I left the sheet in the middle of the body, my hair is like crazy, you now like that, I almost was crazy. And then I don't listen to anything, and the cars—I walk outside like a crazy person. And the cars, the cars make, "beep! beep!" and cross the street with no shoes, and...

T: This is a dream?

A: This is a dream I dreamed myself. I mean, I was so scared and afraid, I was afraid to be crazy, to become crazy, I dreamed that night, and after that night, I stopped thinking a lot.

T: Yeah.

A: I wake up in the morning, I am [??] I am in my bed. I'm like, "Thank God! It was just a dream." I decided not to think about anything else, I just want to laugh and live.

T: Yeah?

A: That was my decision after that night.

T: Just wanna laugh and live?

A: Laugh and live. Whatever trouble you see, whatever hard time you see—I have an accident, no money in my account, my job is... they fire me, or give me a layoff, at that time, a lot of layoffs happening in our country.

T: Yeah, I remember that time.

A: Yes, for people who speak English, who are born here, those who are educated, they don't get a job. How you get a job if you're a refugee, you don't speak English?

T: Yeah, that's hard.

A: It was very hard. It was two—thousand, in the beginning of [date: the recession].

T: Yeah, I remember when that happened, I remember that.

A: You remember that? You know, some people, have a great education, don't have a job.

T: They don't have a job.

A: After that, that was the hardest time of my life. After a few months, I go to check up with a eight-months program when I was in the United States, I went to check up with health issues. Just to check up for... because before the medical insurance—for the eight months, they give you medical insurance, so when you are here eight months, they close the account.

T: So you wanted one more appointment before you...

A: Yeah. Before I, before they close the account, before they say, "Now I have insurance, so I have to go soon, before anything happen." So I went to the check up, and I was there, they, they didn't give you a normal exam, like they gave you checking the heart, the fever, the blood, something like that. The first thing they do, the nurse in there with me is listening to my heart. She says, "Something weird there." "Something what?" And she says, "Your, your heart is not pumping like the way it used to be." I don't speak English, but I understand a little bit. I say, "Wow! What happened?" They bring echo—you know, the echo?

T: Yeah.

A: They bring in the echo, they put me, they put me in a room, they told me, "You have to sleep, to relax here." With the echo, and I was scared because I never, I never saw echo before. I called my friend and say, "They're gonna take my kidney today, can you come and get me?" [laughs] She say, "Who's gonna take your kidney?" my friend from Somalia. And I say, "They're going to take my kidney, [??] I don't know what they're going to do to me." [laughs] And she say, "No one take your kidney, I'm coming!" [we laugh]

T: So it was really just to get your heart checked out?

A: Yeah. It wasn't working the way it was supposed to be. It was pumping one more, like tsh tsh tch tsh, too much. It's slower than it's supposed to be. And then when my friend come, they explain for her why I'm here.

T: Right.

A: They say, “She come here for a checkup, she’s healthy, she come here [??], so we checked it, we notice there’s something, we have to check it, because her heart is not pumping well. That’s the reason for it.” I have too much stress, that’s why my heart is beating sometimes fast, sometimes slow, like pum pum pum, too much. And she say, “Can I sit with her?” They say, “Yeah, you can sit with her, but we are going to have to call the ambulance to take her to the hospital.” Because that was not the big hospital, that was just urgent care.

T: Oh, okay.

A: To the downtown. So they took me to the children’s hospital because I’m still nineteen years old, [laughs] so they take me to the children’s hospital, and then after they put me there, they’re watching the computer for my heart’s beat, it goes, so they put me in something, they say... I will not spend the night here. I don’t know what you guys are doing, I grew up Somalia, I think... Grew up Somalia, they can’t do anything for you. And still, my mind is there. If they do anything with me here, with no one around me, they can do anything, so I didn’t understand the system. They wanted to help me, I didn’t understand the system, so I say, “Don’t leave me.” She say, “I have a job, I have to go to work. They’re not going to do nothing you.” I say, “If I die will you come back?” [laughs]

T: Did you ever find out what was wrong?

A: Um, finally, they, they told me, “We need four hours to check you, how, how fast, I mean, your process is going slowly, we don’t know what happened. A lot of doctors come, they try everything, they check a lot of examinations to say, they ask me a lot of questions, “Have you”—There’s a translation in the phone—they say, “Does she have a problem? Does anyone bother her at home? Does she have any problem, she can say, she can tell us, we’re gonna keep a secret, everything, we don’t tell anybody.” I say, “I’m scared, I’m lonely here, I stressed, I am thinking a lot, I feel sometimes I am crazy.” And they say, “Listen,” This big doctor who told me, almost, he seventy-five, maybe sixty-something like that [light laugh], he was old man, he told me, “Listen, young girl, I know you are lonely here in this country. And you have age—a young age, but I can promise you will, you will used to everything, you will be good person, you can get a job, you will have a lot of opportunity to do it, but I want you to be happy and quiet. Don’t stress a lot.”

T: Yeah.

A: “Be happy. Laugh because you’re healthy. This is not good for you. You cannot do anything if you not take care of yourself. So be careful you’re healthy.”

T: Yeah. And you did it.

A: After that... “I promise,” I say, “I will.”

T: You feel better?

A: Yeah. He say, “We gonna keep you tonight here, and we will see you tomorrow how you feel, but I want you to be rest, be relaxed, not thinking anything about anything you can sleep. But this thing, the echo’s information, it can give the computer, we can watch the computer how fast

your heart is working.” I sleep that night, I stay that day, and then my friend come took me up.... I, I stay another night.

T: Yeah.

A: And then in the morning they tell me, “You’re good to go! You’re absolutely going down, and your health is coming completely fine. We checked everything, you are so very healthy.”

T: You did it!

A: I did it [laughs] I say, “I don’t wanna nobody take me anywhere else...” [laughs]

T: No more. Let me go home to my room, my quiet, quiet empty house.

A: [laughs] Yeah. And then step by step my life has come...relaxed.

T: Yeah.

A: Yeah.

[...And life moved on. After the recession hit, the phone company had to let Asma go, and she moved to Columbus, Ohio in order to be closer with an uncle, a cousin of her father’s. After staying with them, she reached out to a friend to see if she could move out on her own.]

A: I say, “Hey, I just wanna live, uh, out the family. Because I don’t want to give them some more...I mean, they’re family and I’m-I’m the guest, you know?”

T: Yeah.

A: And then he told me, “Okay, there is a girl who, who her, live with her uncle. That girl, her uncle go back to Somalia, so his room is empty.”

T: Yeah.

A: “So I know that girl and let me call her and ask her if she need some people.” I say, “Okay.” I wait one day, the second day I call him back, “Hey, did you find...?” He told me, “Hey, you’re fast! [laughs] Just calm down!” And then he respond me after three days, and then he say the girl, the room is available, but the rent...”

T: Yeah.

A: “Is...too expensive.”

T: Mmm.

A: If you only guys two.

T: Right.

A: “Six, six hundred something, divided two people.”

T: Oh, wow. That’s a lot.

A: I say, "I'll take it. I'll take it." He say, "That's a lot of money, where you gonna get it, it's just working part-time..." I say, "I will get another job!"

T: Oooh, okay.

A: Yes! [laughs]

T: To pay the rent.

A: I say, "I will get another job, I'm not gonna stay with part-time only."

T: Right.

A: "I have a lot to do." He say, "Umm." Because he was afraid, maybe I'm not gonna pay my bills?

T: Yeah.

A: He say, "Um, let me try to...find you another job, or maybe you just stay—" I say, "Okay, hey, listen. I know how to live my situation."

T: Yeah.

A: "Just take me there, I will fix everything, you know? I'm not gonna ask you anything."

T: Yeah.

A: And then he say, "Okay." He give me the number, I go, I call the girl and we met, I met her, her apartment, I see everything.

T: Yeah.

A: And...the room was ready, have a bed, have a, a..

T: Yeah.

A: I just change some stuff on my own...

T: Yeah.

A: And, and, that girl, until now she's my friend. [laughs]

T: Cool!

A: Yeah! [laughs]

[And so, what was originally just a layover on her bus ride from Detroit to Louisville eventually became the home where she met her husband, had three kids, and finally returned to college. Her hope turned into the life she is so proud of.]